DARK HORSE COMICS

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OUTLANDERS™

by JOHJI MANABE
BOOK ZERO

INSIDE:
special color poster!

STUDIO PROTEUS

THE DEMON OF SPACE...

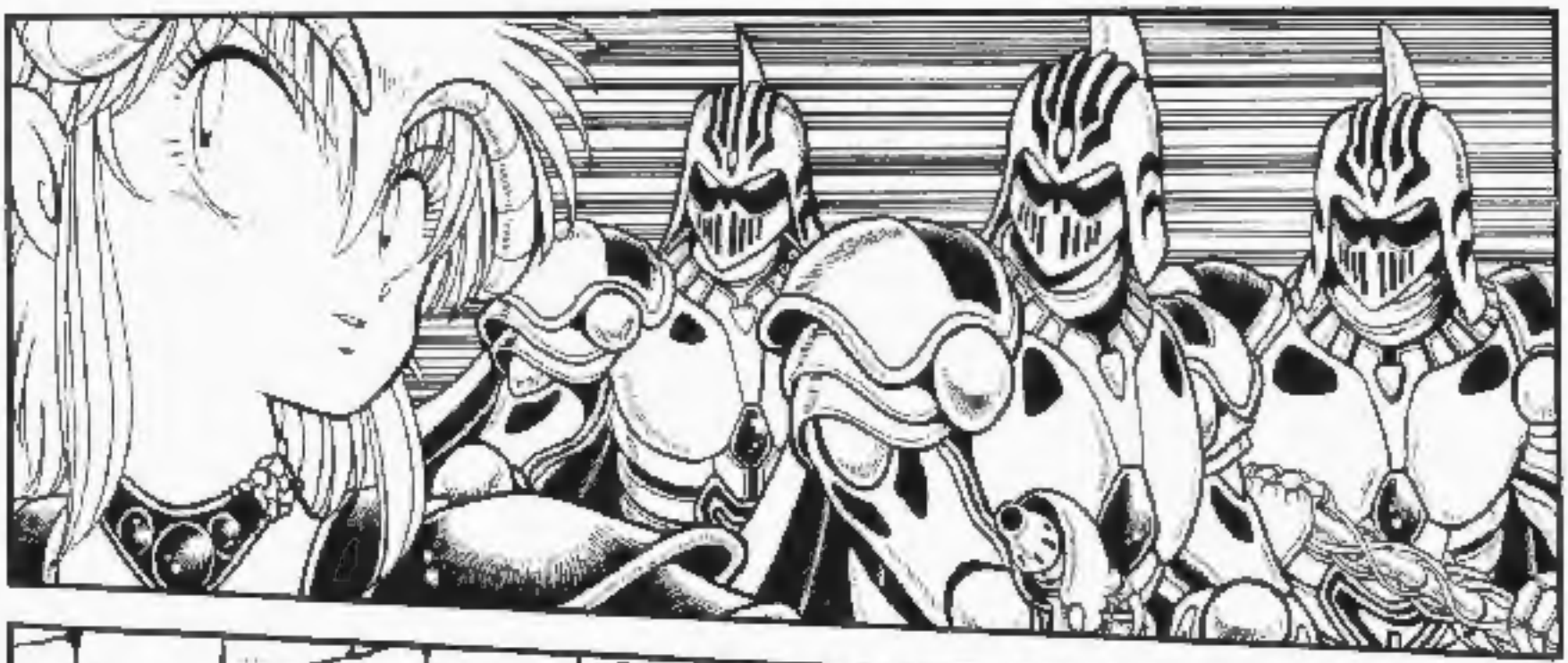
THE DEVIL IS COMING...

COMING TO DESTROY ME...

...AND TO STEAL MY KEY-- THE KEY OF GRACIALE!

WHAM
BOOM
BOOM
WHAM
WHAM
WHAM
AIEEEE!
WHKROOM

AAAA..
SAVE ME...
CRAK
FINDERS KEEPERS !



SO YOU'VE BEEN COWERING DOWN IN THIS DUNGEON, EH?
HMPH! THE "GREAT SORCERER" BIRUK, HIDING LIKE A RAT!

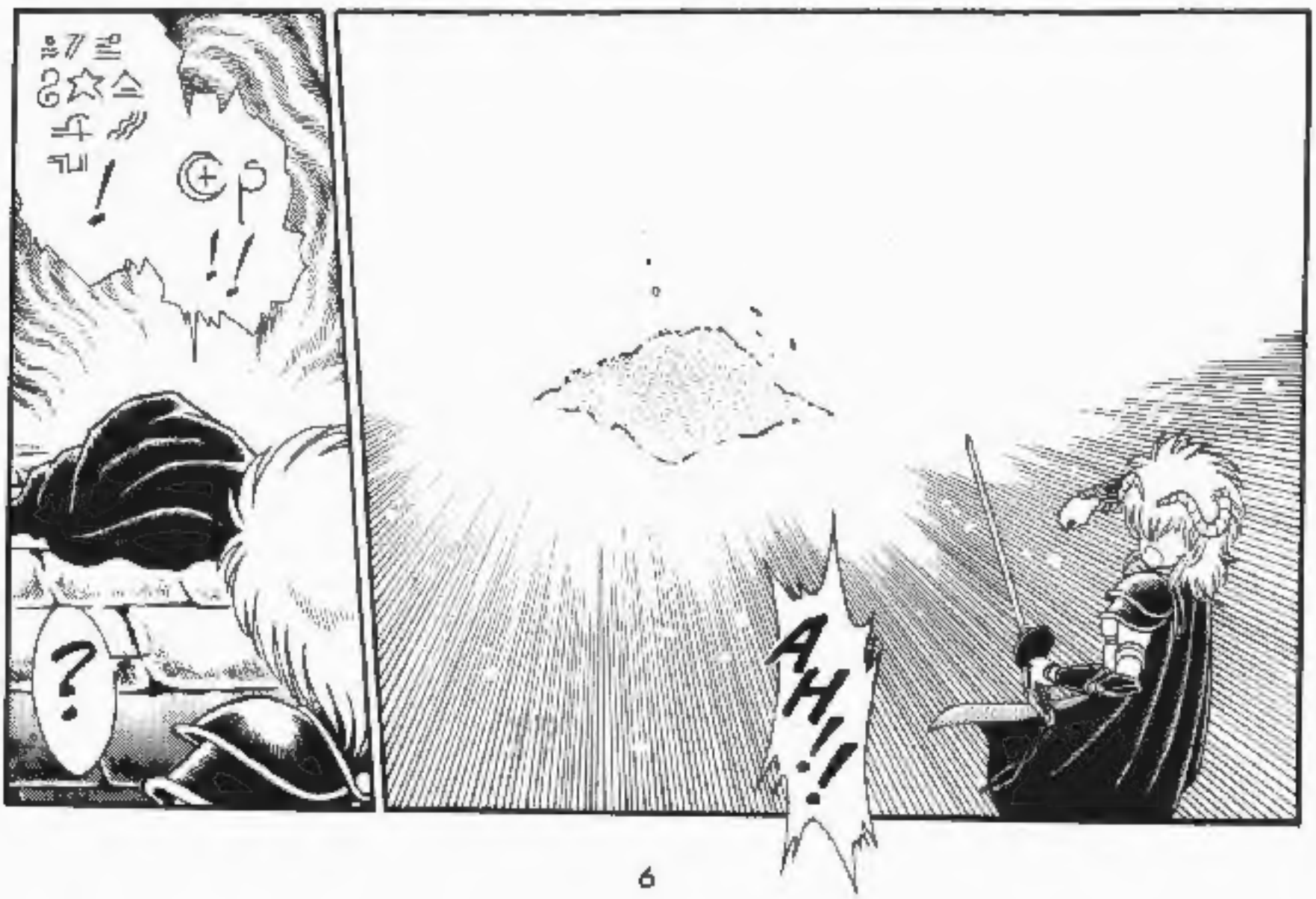
HAND OVER THE KEY, WORM.
THAT IS, IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE...
THE CURSES OF THE PIT UPON YOU, SANTOVASKU DEVIL!
YOU'LL NEVER POSSESS THE KEY OF GRACIALE!
NEVER!!

WHCHOK
FWDD
HAH! YELLOW-BELLIED SPAWN OF HELL!
AAAARGH!
THINK AGAIN ABOUT WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH, SORCERER!

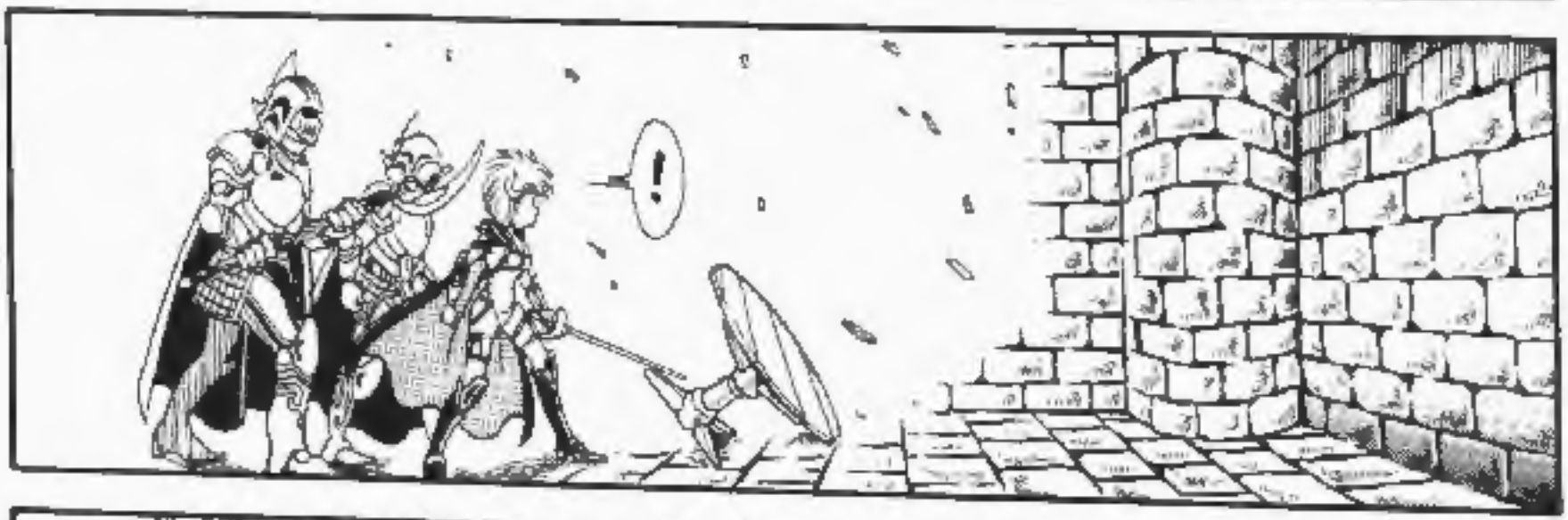
KYAHAHA!
I DID IT!
I'VE GOT THE KEY OF GRACIALE, TOTEM OF POWER, BEARER OF GOOD FORTUNE!

LOOK WELL, GIRUK! THE KEY'S FOUND ITSELF A WORTHY MISTRESS AT LAST!
IT WOULD NEVER WORK FOR A FOUL-HEARTED CREATURE LIKE YOURSELF!

STILL, IT WAS A PATHETIC BATTLE.
A BUNCH OF PUPPET SOLDIERS IN A SCABBY LITTLE CASTLE...
HM, AH!
AND FOR THE GRAND FINALE, ONE MOTH-EATEN SORCERER.


?
AH!!

DON'T THINK THAT YOU'VE PREVAILED OVER ME, PRINCESS KAHM OF THE SANTOVASKU ?
I CANNOT SO EASILY BE DEFEATED ?
NO MATTER HOW STRONG MY ENEMIES!
I SHALL HAVE THE KEY BACK, YOU WITLESS FOOL, AND YOU SHALL YET GROVEL BEFORE ME!!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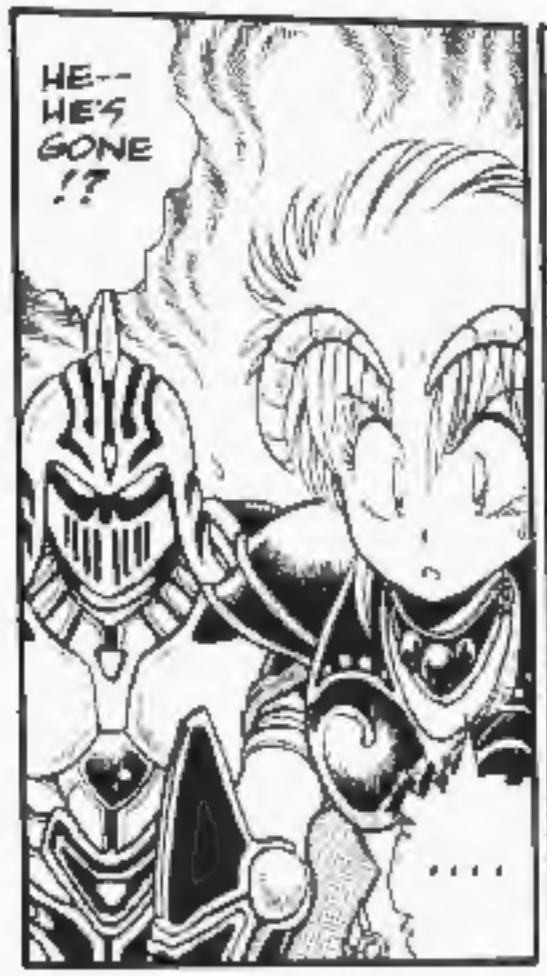

HE-- HE'S GONE !?
....

ALL RIGHT, MEN!

DON'T JUST STAND THERE, YOU IDIOTS!
Y-YES, YOUR HIGHNESS!
HE'S GOT TO BE SOMEWHERE IN THIS CASTLE.
FIND HIM!!

IT WAS THREE YEARS EARLIER THAT THE RUMORS FIRST REACHED THE IMPERIAL PLANET--RUMORS OF A MYSTERIOUS "KEY," THE KEY OF GRACIALE--SAID TO BEQUEATH TO ITS OWNER TREMENDOUS MAGICAL POWERS.
THE KEY WAS TO BE FOUND ON PLANET HELSGARD, OR SO IT WAS SAID. THERE IT WAS HELD IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE INFAMOUS BLACK SORCERER, GIRUK...
THE EMPEROR OF THE SANTOVAGKU GALACTIC EMPIRE DESIRED THAT LEGENDARY KEY. AND THUS HE SENT HIS OWN DAUGHTER TO HELSGARD, THERE TO BESIEGE GIRUK'S KEEP AND BRING BACK THE KEY...
THERE'S NOTHING AT ALL IN THIS DUMB CASTLE.
NOTHING BUT A BUNCH OF DEAD SOLDIERS.

PRINCESS KAHM SAID IT WOULD BE FULL OF THE SORCERER'S STOLEN BOOTY...
KANG
WELL, WE'VE GOT TO FIND SOMETHING OR SHE'LL BLOW HER TOP...

THESE SOLDIERS ARE REALLY WEIRD...
THEY'RE ALL HOLLOW INSIDE.
THEY'RE JUST EMPTY SHELLS--
GIRUK MADE THEM MOVE WITH HIS MAGIC.
MAN...WE MOBILIZED THREE DIVISIONS AND EVEN BOMBARDED THIS RAT HOLE FROM ORBIT. WHAT A WASTE OF TAXPAYERS' MONEY...

GEE, BOSS... EVEN WE COULD BEAT AN ENEMY LIKE THIS, RIGHT, BOSS?
OF COURSE WE COULD, MEGANE, MY LAD! BWAHAHA!

GIRUK, DAMN YOU!
COME OUT AND FIGHT, YOU SNIVELING COWARD !!
SKRASSH
UH, OH... IT'S THE PRINCESS, ALREADY...

CURSE HIS BONES... I SHOULD HAVE CARVED HIM TO QUIVERING BITS WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE!!
THIS IS WHAT I GET FOR SPARING THE LIFE OF SUCH A DEVIOUS CUR!

HOORAY FOR PRINCESS KAHM!!

GET OUT OF MY WAY!! YOU'RE BLOCKING THE HALL!!

WHSSSH

WEEEK!

IS IS S-SOMETHING WRONG?

A BLOODSTAIN!

HUH?

UHM, B-BUT AREN'T THERE ALWAYS BLOODSTAINS ON A BATTLEFIELD?

IDIOT! IT'S THE KIND OF BLOODSTAIN!

THIS WAS OBVIOUSLY LEFT BY THE HEM OF A ROBE DRENCHED IN BLOOD.

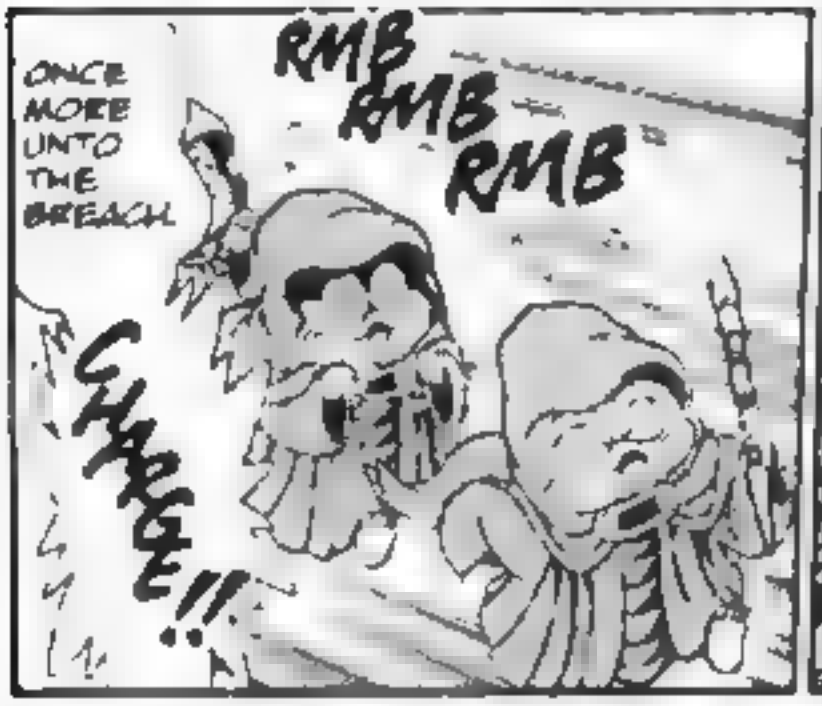
UH RIGHT, OF COURSE.

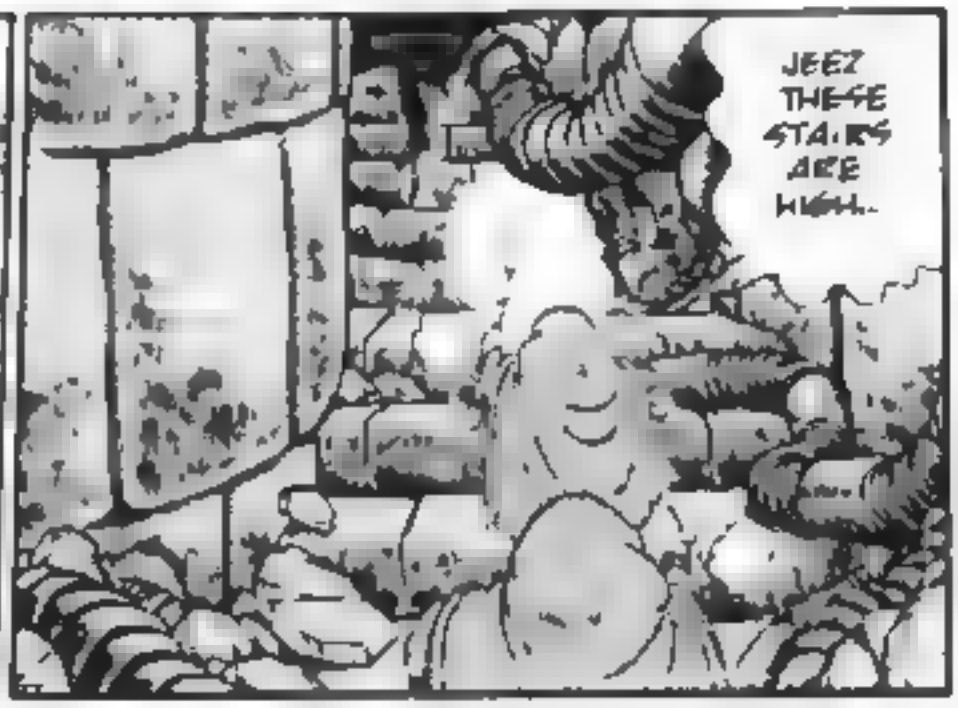
THAT BASTARD! HE WENT DOWN THIS CORRIDOR.

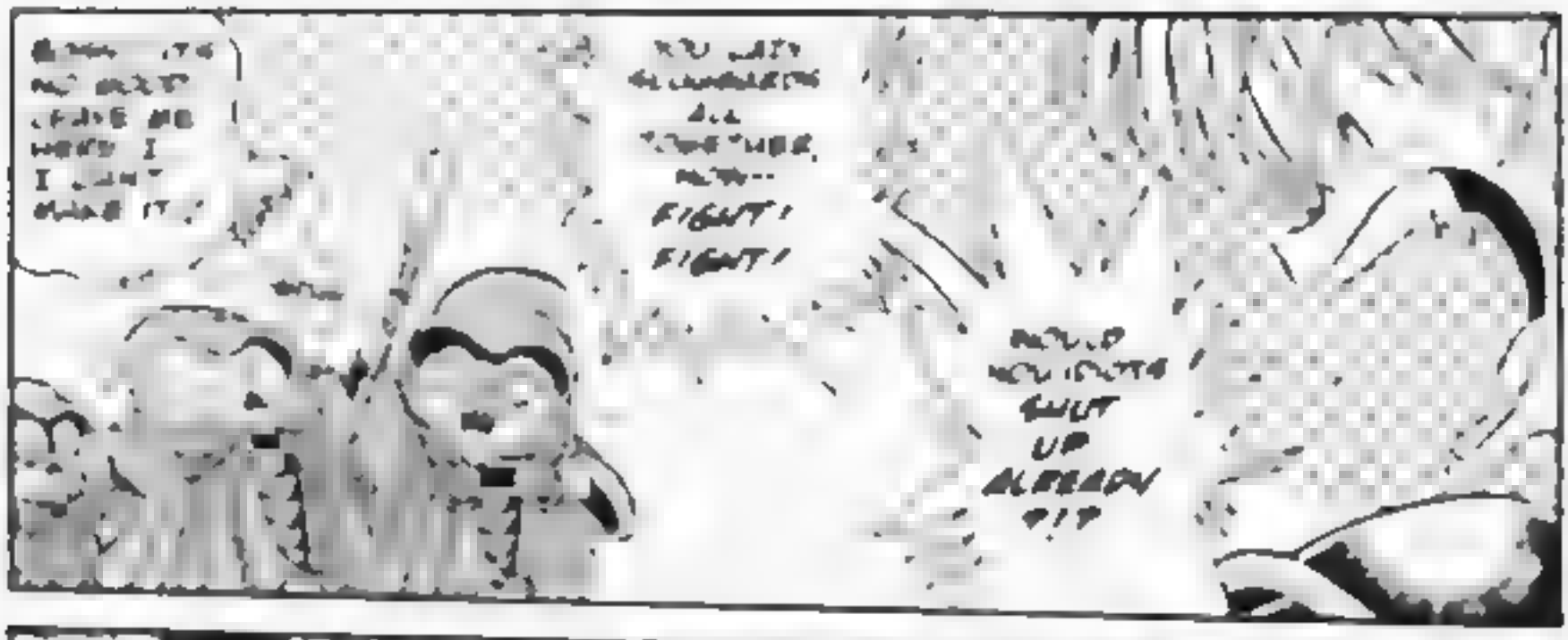
WHERE DOES THAT STAIRWAY GO?
APPARENTLY TO THE TOP OF THE CASTLE KEEP, MAAM

SO WE'VE TRAPPED OUR RAT HAVE WE. HAHA

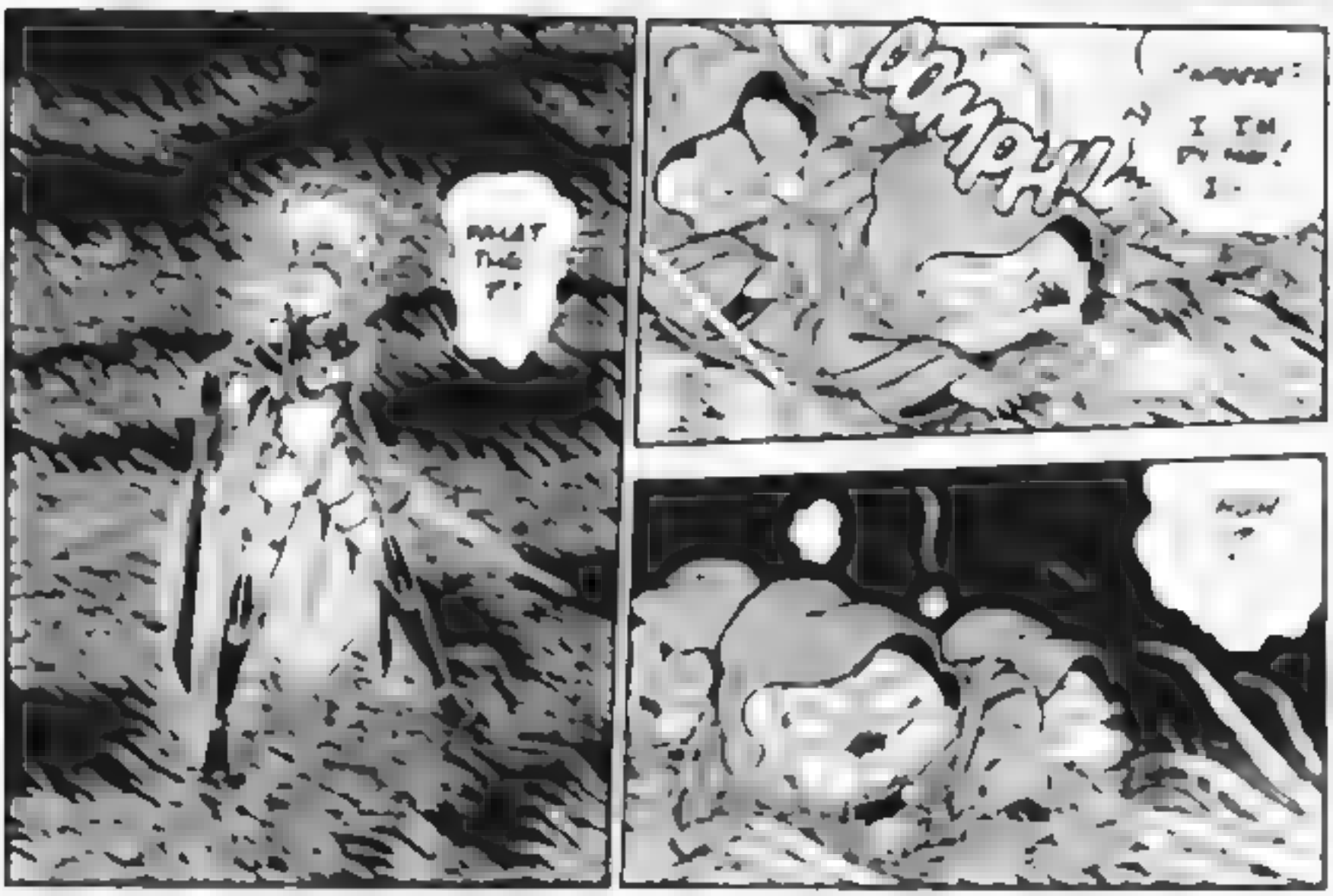
GOOD ENOUGH! ALL RIGHT, YOU LOT GIVE ME A HAND!
BEING A LIGHT, AND FOLLOW ME!
YES YOUR HIGHNESS!


ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH
RMB RMB RMB
CHARGE!!

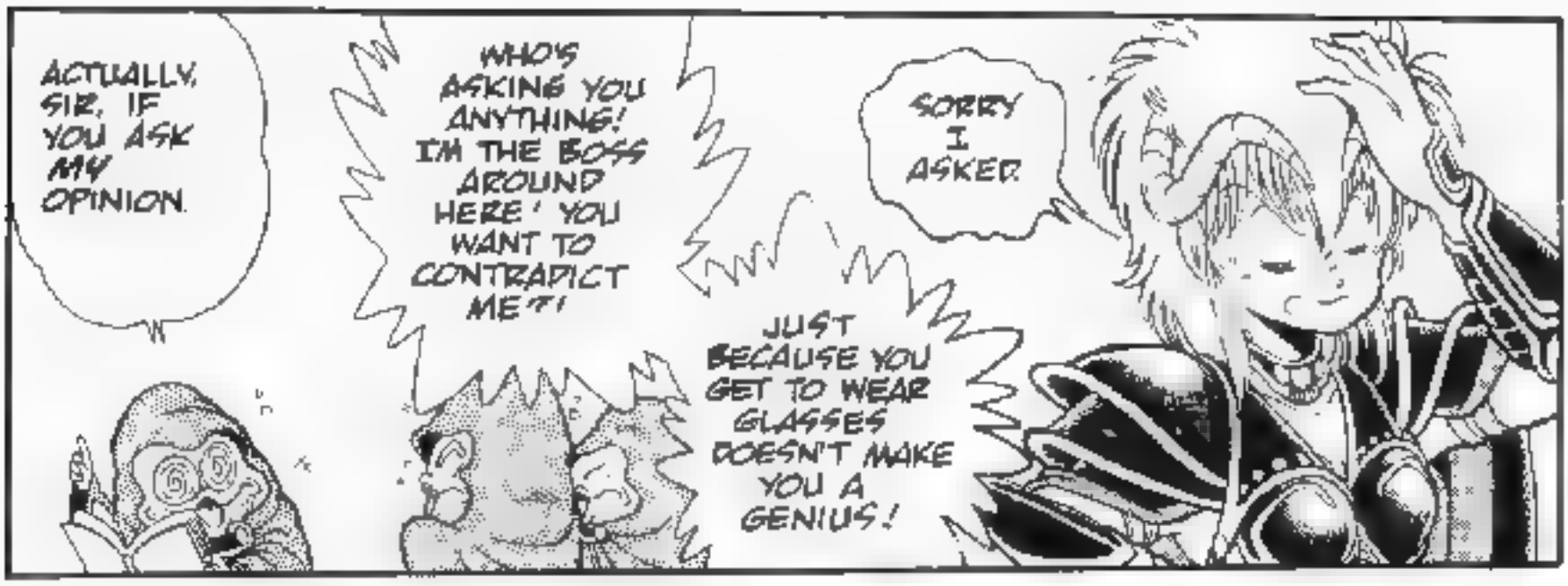

JEEZ THESE STAIRS ARE HIGH...

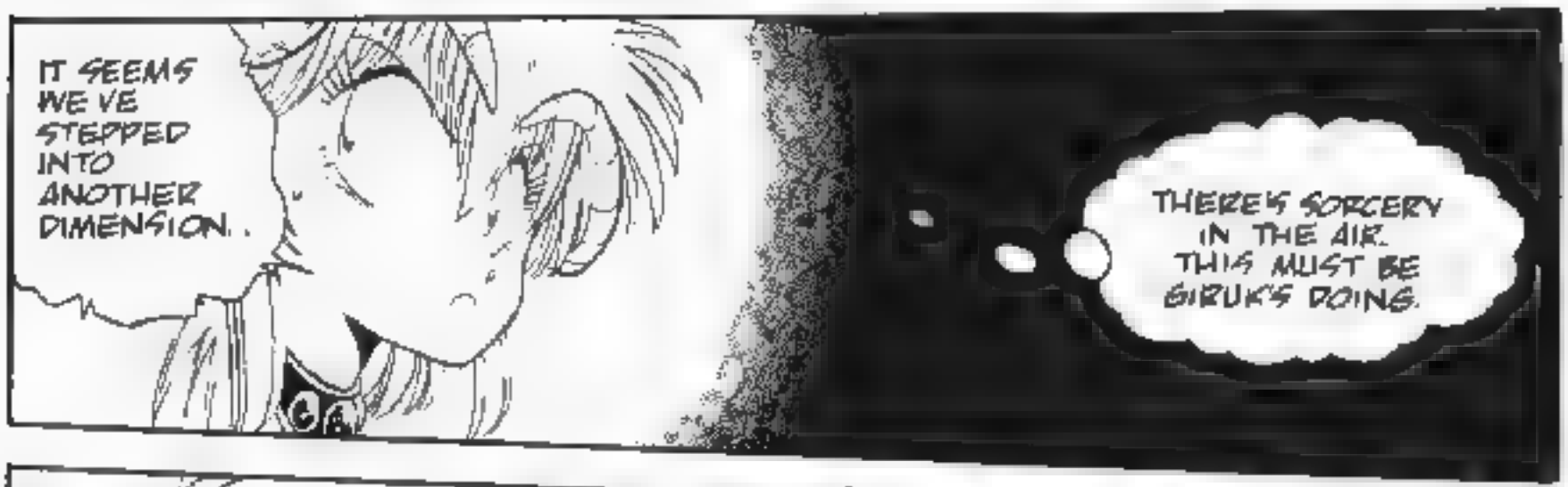

FIGHT!
FIGHT!
SHUT UP ALREADY!!

EH?

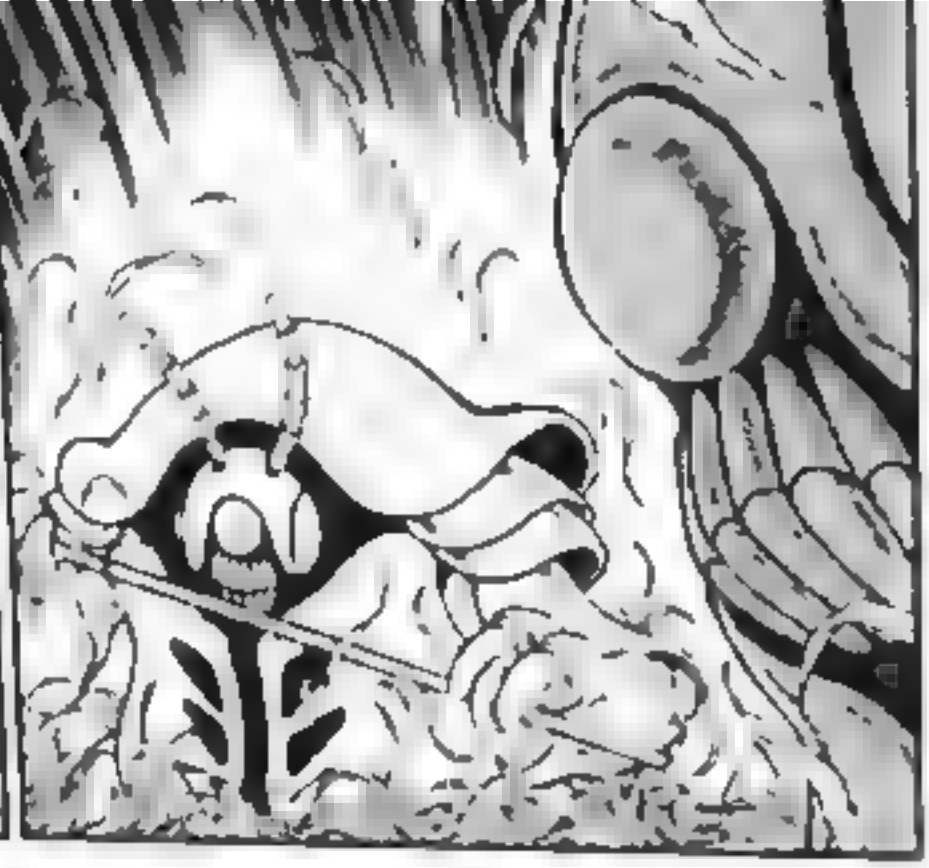

WHAT THE?!
COMPA
I'M

GEE. WHERE DO YOU SUPPOSE WE ARE ?
WELL, MA'AM.. I, UH, I DON'T THINK WE'RE INSIDE THE CASTLE, EXACTLY...
BUT THEN, WE JUST KEPT GOING HIGHER AND HIGHER, SO I DON'T THINK WE'RE OUTSIDE THE CASTLE, EITHER
HMM...
WHEREVER IT IS IT'S SORTA CREEPY


ACTUALLY, SIR, IF YOU ASK MY OPINION.
WHO'S ASKING YOU ANYTHING! I'M THE BOSS AROUND HERE! YOU WANT TO CONTRADICT ME?!
SORRY I ASKED.
JUST BECAUSE YOU GET TO WEAR GLASSES DOESN'T MAKE YOU A GENIUS!


IT SEEMS WE'VE STEPPED INTO ANOTHER DIMENSION..
THERE'S SORCERY IN THE AIR. THIS MUST BE GIRUK'S DOING.

SKSCH
CHIK CHIK



YEEEEEK!

UMPH! THEY SURPRISED ME FOR A MOMENT THERE BUT IT'S JUST MORE OF GIERUS HOLLOW MEN

COME ON TRY AND TAKE ME!
I'LL CRACK YOUR SHELLS LIKE A LOBSTER!

I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE OF THAT

GIRUK!

B-BLACK SSORCERER GIRUK !!

OH, MOMMY, I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN A [illegible] I'M [illegible]

THE PRINCESS NEVER TOLD ME IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS!

HEY! LET ME GO!

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF THE DEAD, DEAR PRINCESS.

YOU'VE FALLEN RIGHT INTO MY TRAP

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?!

WHY, IN OTHER WORDS, MY LITTLE BLONDE [illegible] EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED IN MY CASTLE WAS JUST AN *ILLUSION* TO LURE YOU TO THIS SPOT

BEHOLD! MY HAND IS UNTOUCHED [illegible]

IN THIS WORLD [illegible]

YOUR [illegible] IS POWERLESS HERE

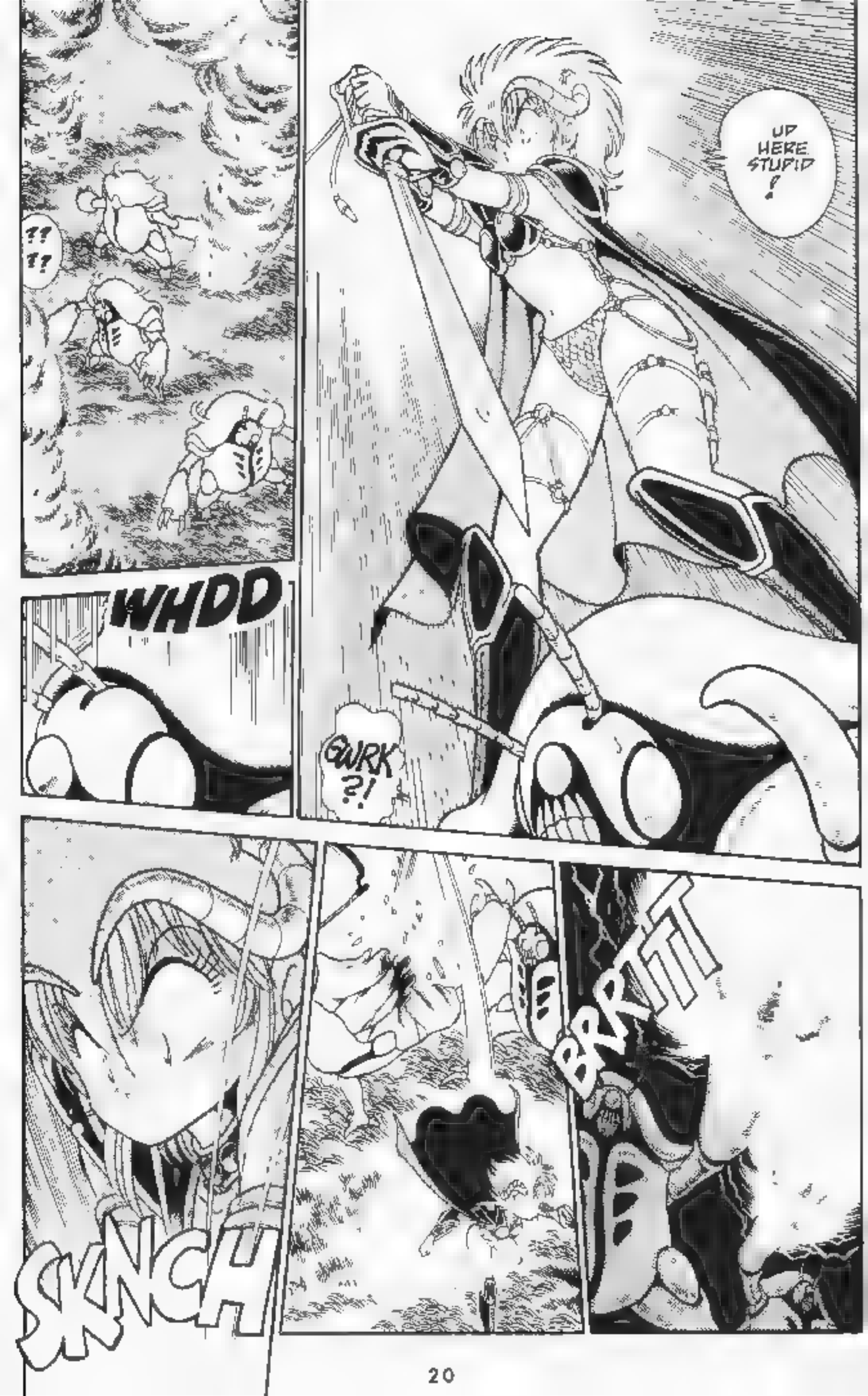
PFFT. NAO..
TAKE THIS FOR ME...
YES, MA'AM ?
THE-- THE KEY OF GRACIALE !
LISTEN CAREFULLY--AS SOON AS THE FIGHTING STARTS, YOU GUYS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CONFUSION TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.
GET AS FAR AWAY AS YOU CAN!
DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT ME-- I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF
BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU, PRINCESS?
JUST GO-AND DON'T GET CAUGHT OR I'LL SKIN YOU ALIVE MYSELF!!

SKRAKKK
DIE!!!
PMB
PMB
PMB
!

WHOOSH

WRAMM
BKOOM
G-GEE.. I WONDER IF PRINCESS KAHMS ALL RIGHT..
HURRY, HURRY!

BKOOM
BKOOM
BKOOM
LOUSY SHOTS!


?? ??
UP HERE STUPID!
WHDD
GWRK ?!
SKNCH
BRRTT

HAH!

DIE !!

SKRASSH
WHUD
FWMP
YEOW!

THAT HURT!! THESE DAMNED PIECES OF JUNK!
JUST WHEN I WAS GETTING INTO IT...

WHOMP
WHMP
FWOOD
EEEK!
THUD
GET OFFA ME YOU LOUSY OVERWEIGHT CREEPS!!
HEY! WATCH THOSE CLAWS, PAL!
SO, FINALLY I HAVE HER..
DAMN YOU! LET ME GO!!
SHE MUST HAVE THE KEY ON HER SOMEWHERE!
STRIP HER AND FIND IT!

!!
REIP
YEEK!
UNHAND ME, YOU SWINE !!
PERVERTS! HOW DARE YOU!!
OOOH! MUST BE CHILLY!
SHE DOESN'T HAVE IT?!
THAT'S ABSURD!
SHE CAN'T HAVE LOST IT!

YOU BITCH! WHERE DID YOU HIDE THE KEY?!!

SO SORRY TO SPOIL YOUR PLANS.

. BUT MY LOYAL RETAINERS ARE ALREADY ON THEIR WAY BACK TO THE EMPEROR.

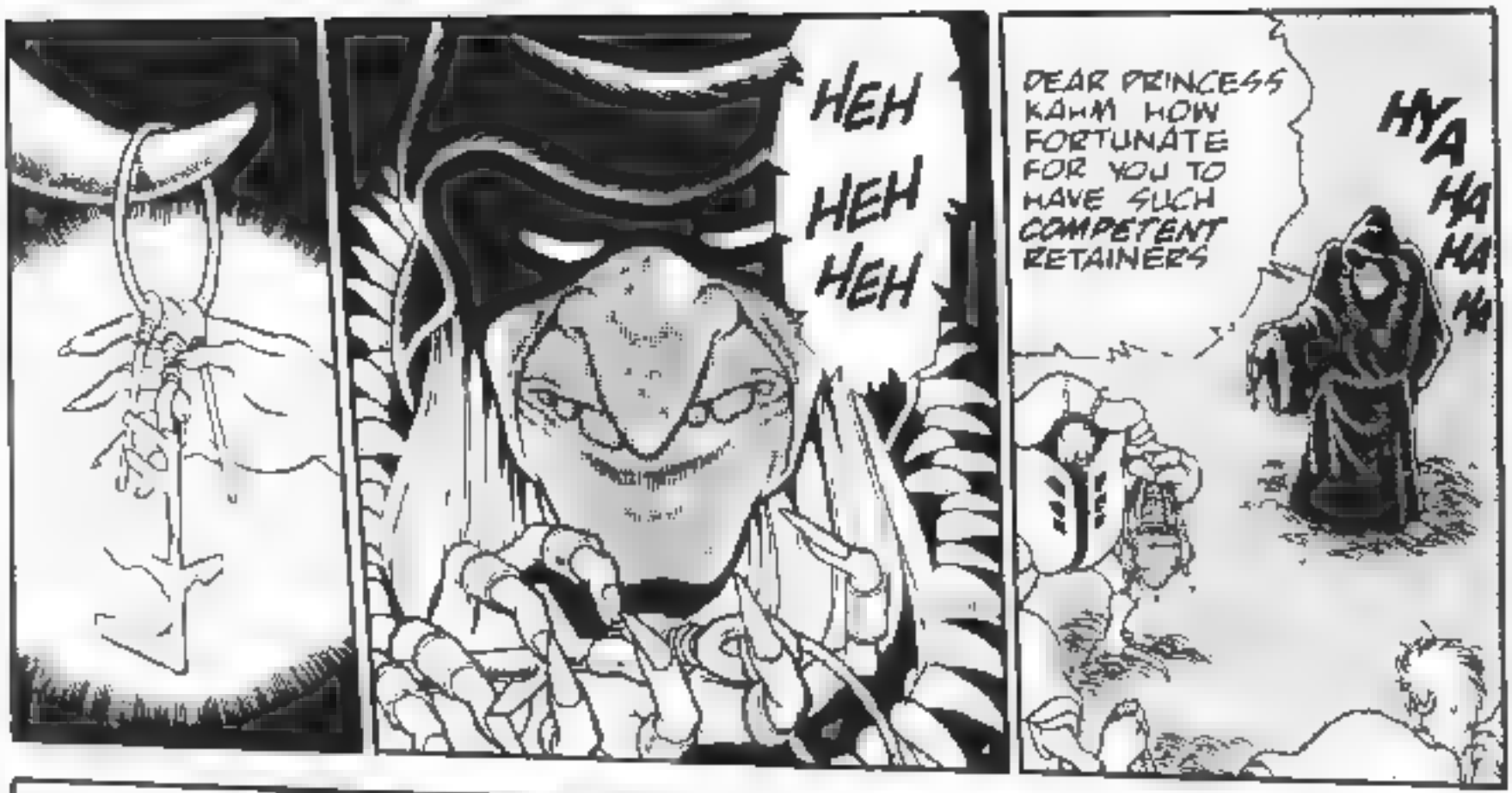
WITH THE KEY !!

GRR...

YAHEEE!!

GWEEK!

IT FIGURES


HEH HEH HEH
DEAR PRINCESS KAHM HOW FORTUNATE FOR YOU TO HAVE SUCH COMPETENT RETAINERS
HYA HA HA HA

OOOH! PRINCESS KAHM! I LIKE YOUR NEW OUTFIT !!
I'M NOT LOOKING, I'M NOT, I'M NOT !!
YOU LITTLE SKUNKS.

IDIOTS!
MORONS!! WHAT WERE YOU DOING HANGING AROUND HERE?! I TOLD YOU TO RUN AWAY!!

WELL UH, YES BUT ACTUALLY, YOU SEE.
GOSH. GEE.
WE WERE WORRIED ABOUT YOU, MA'AM. SO, WE DIDN'T ER Y'KNOW.

YOU BUMBLING BLOCKHEADS! WHY DO YOU THINK I GAVE YOU THE STUPID KEY?!!
ENOUGH! THINGS HAVE TURNED OUT PERFECTLY

WHAT DO YOU SAY, PRINCESS?
THE KEY IS BACK IN MY HANDS, JUST AS I SAID.

Pfff!

HNNG!

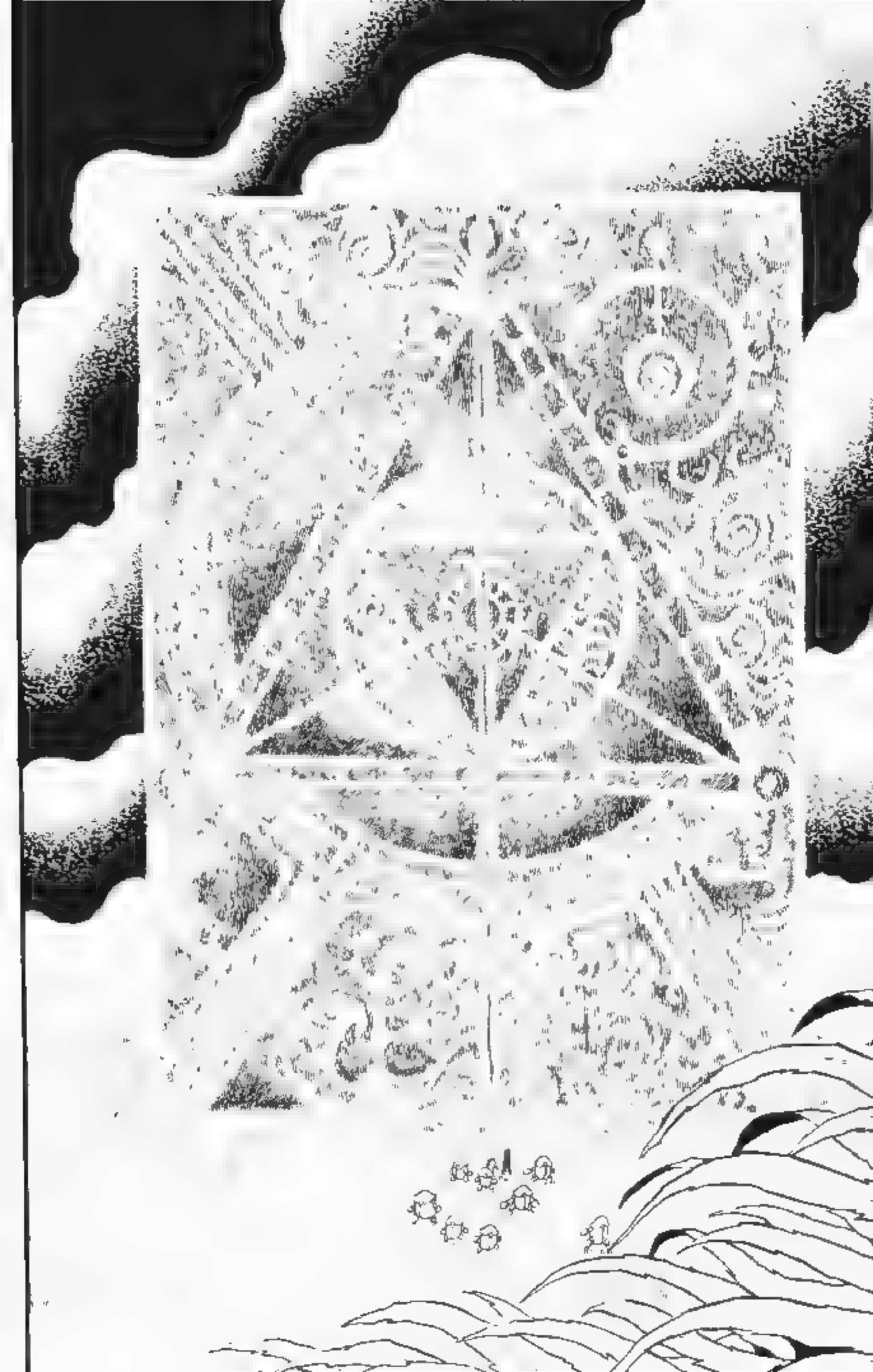
YOU FILTHY LITTLE VIXEN !!
KRAK
KRAK

AAH!! PRINCESS KAHM !!

FOOLISH BITCH!
SO NOW YOU GROVEL BEFORE ME JUST AS I PREDICTED, EH?!

DAMN YOU!
SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?! KILL ME!!

OH NO, MY DEAR I HAVE NO INTENTION OF KILLING YOU, NOT YET I STILL HAVE A LITTLE SOMETHING I NEED YOU TO DO FOR ME.



WHAT TH-- WHAT IS THAT THING ?
SOME KIND OF GIANT DOOR ?

PRINCESS KAHM. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THAT KEY IS REALLY FOR ?

WELL, SURE! THEY SAY THE KEY BRINGS POWER AND GOOD FORTUNE TO WHOEVER OWNS IT
JUST AS I THOUGHT.

THIS LITTLE BEAUTY OF MINE..
ITS REAL PURPOSE IS TO OPEN THE DOOR OF THE DEAD

THE DOOR OF THE DEAD...?

THAT'S RIGHT THE NAME SAYS IT ALL. THIS IS THE HOME OF DEAD SPIRITS.
ALL WHO LIVE AND WALK IN THE SUN MUST COME IN TIME TO THIS DARK VALE
BEYOND THE DOOR OF THE DEAD ARE NUMBERLESS SPIRITS WAITING FOR REINCARNATION IN THE LAND OF LIGHT

BUT REBIRTH REQUIRES A VAST SURGE OF SPIRIT ENERGY... THE DEAD WAIT HERE FOR EONS, SLOWLY GATHERING THAT POWER.
IF I CAN OPEN THIS DOOR AT WILL AND TAP THAT POWER FOR MYSELF...
"AYE, THE VERY KEY OF THE DEAD. THE KEY THEY SAY IS USED BUT ONCE IN TENS OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS BY THE GODS THEMSELVES...
"BUT WITH COUNTLESS YEARS AND DECADES OF STUDY, I COPIED THAT KEY!"
AND IF I CAN CONTROL THE ENERGY OF THE DEAD, THEN I CAN TURN THE TABLES ON THE LIVING! I CAN DRAG YOUR FOUL WORLD OF LIGHT INTO THE DARKNESS... AND DESTROY IT!
NO KIDDING? I HAD NO IDEA...
WOW
SO WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH ME, HUH?! WHAT'D YOU DRAG ME HERE FOR?!
IF YOU WANT TO OPEN YOUR STUPID OLD DOOR, GO AHEAD AND OPEN IT!
FOOL!! THE DOOR CAN'T BE OPENED BY JUST ANYONE!
IT MUST [redacted] SOMEONE RICH IN MAGICAL POWERS,
AND ABOVE ALL, ONE WHOSE HEART DOES NOT HUNGER TO MAKE THE POWER OF DEATH HIS OWN

BY GOLLY! THAT MEANS WE MUST BE CHOCK FULL OF MAGIC!

THAT'S RIGHT BOSS. HE BROUGHT US ALL THE WAY HERE, JUST US!

IMOK

YOU IMBECILES! I DIDN'T LURE YOU HERE! YOU BLUNDERED YOUR WAY IN ON YOUR OWN!!

OH, YEAH.. RIGHT

I UNDERSTAND IT NOW.. THE PORTAL GUARDING THE SPIRITS OF THE DEAD IS SACRED.

IT WON'T OPEN FOR SOME HERETIC LIKE YOU WHO WANTS TO ABUSE THAT POWER.

EXACTLY, MY DEAR. BUT YOU... YOU ARE STEEPED IN THE MAGIC OF THE RULING HOUSE OF THE GALACTIC EMPIRE.

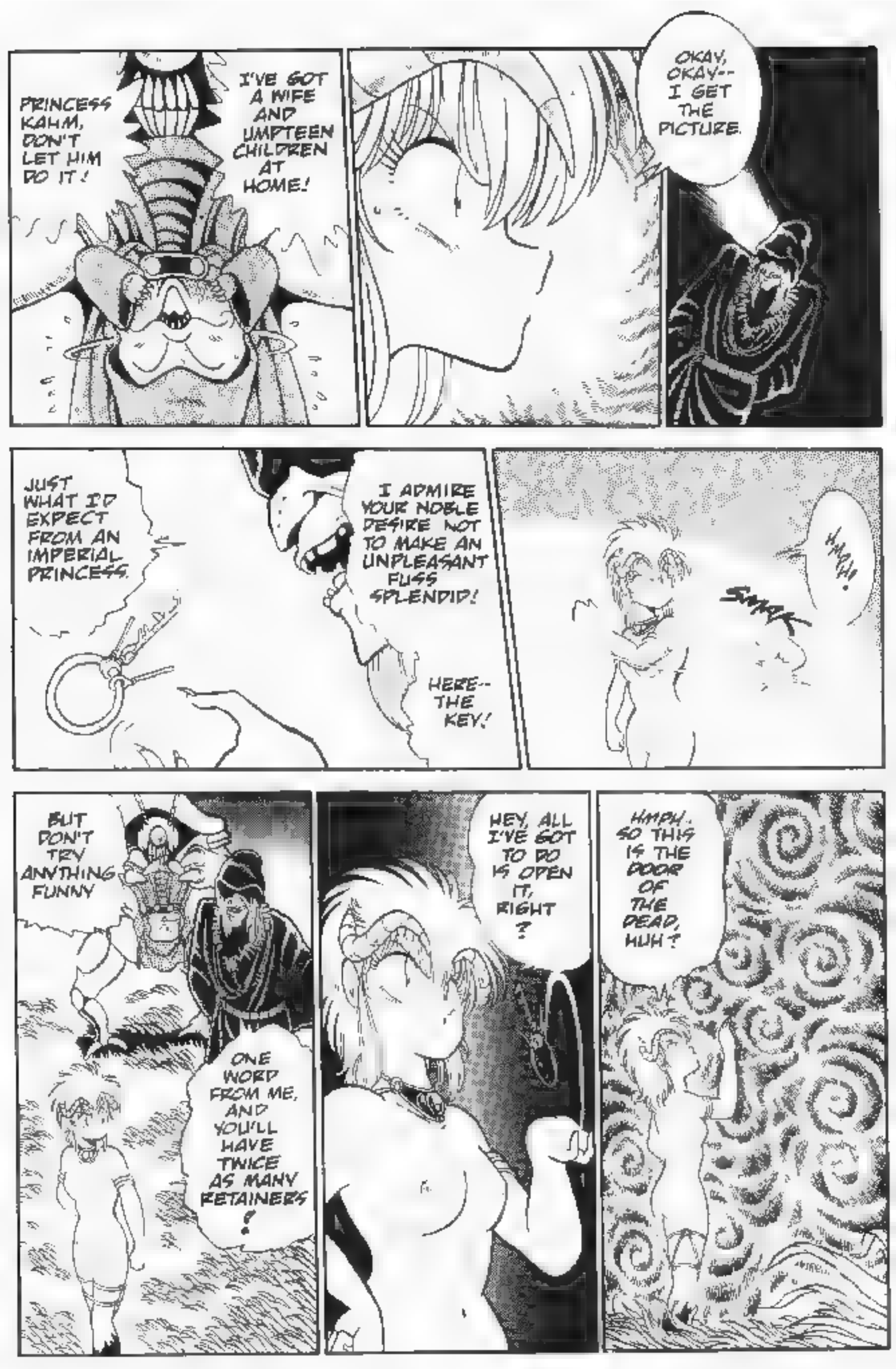
AND SINCE YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THIS KEY WAS FOR, YOU'RE PURE ENOUGH FOR MY PURPOSES...

SO.. WILL YOU COOPERATE, PRINCESS KAHMT!

BUG OFF! WHO'S GOING TO-

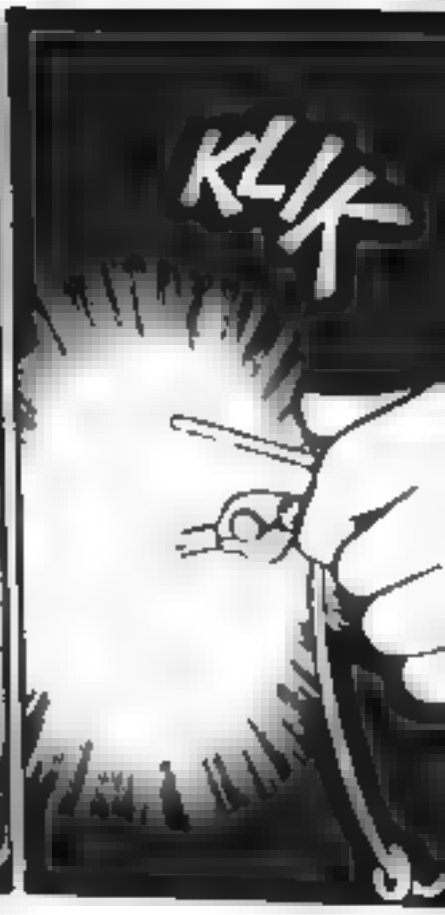
I'LL TEAR YOUR LITTLE TOADIES IN HALF!!

OUWIE OUWIE OWWW!!


PRINCESS KAHM, DON'T LET HIM DO IT!
I'VE GOT A WIFE AND UMPTEEN CHILDREN AT HOME!
OKAY, OKAY-- I GET THE PICTURE.
JUST WHAT I'D EXPECT FROM AN IMPERIAL PRINCESS.
I ADMIRE YOUR NOBLE DESIRE NOT TO MAKE AN UNPLEASANT FUSS SPLENDID!
HERE-- THE KEY!
SMACK
HMPH!
BUT DON'T TRY ANYTHING FUNNY
ONE WORD FROM ME, AND YOU'LL HAVE TWICE AS MANY RETAINERS!
HEY, ALL I'VE GOT TO DO IS OPEN IT, RIGHT?
HMPH. SO THIS IS THE DOOR OF THE DEAD, HUH?

QUICKLY! QUICKLY !!
AW QUIT YOUR WHINING— I SAID I'D DO IT!

RIGHT HERE, HM?


KLIK

ACTUALLY I'M KINDA INTERESTED, TOO
IN WHAT'S BEYOND THIS DOOR
KCHAK

!

GRWWW

NOW IT COMES! THE POWER OF THE DEAD !!

I WILL ABSORB IT ALL !!

IT WILL BE MINE !!

I SHALL BE THE MOST POWERFUL BEING IN THE GALAXY! I SHALL BE EMPEROR OF ALL!!

WHA ?

AAH!

AAARGH!!

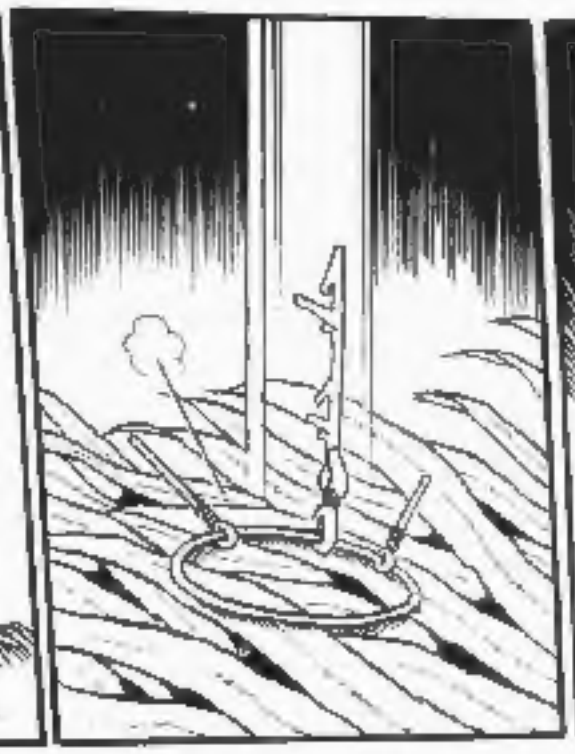
AIEEEE!!!

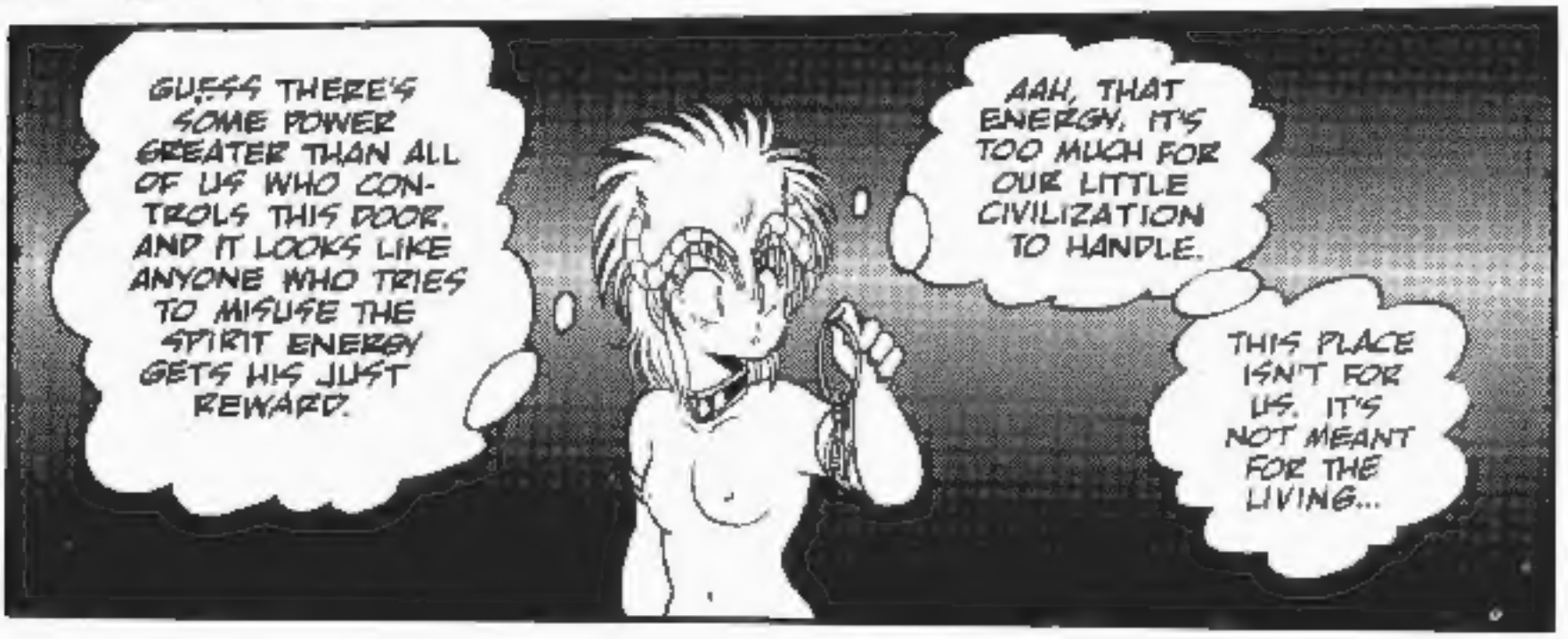
GUAAA!!
FIZZAKK
YOW!
GNPH!

WHA--WHAT HAPPENED?
THEY ALL DROPPED DEAD!

SHKOOM!

AAH! IT CLOSED!




GUESS THERE'S SOME POWER GREATER THAN ALL OF US WHO CONTROLS THIS DOOR. AND IT LOOKS LIKE ANYONE WHO TRIES TO MISUSE THE SPIRIT ENERGY GETS HIS JUST REWARD.
AAH, THAT ENERGY. IT'S TOO MUCH FOR OUR LITTLE CIVILIZATION TO HANDLE.
THIS PLACE ISN'T FOR US. IT'S NOT MEANT FOR THE LIVING...

SKSSH
PRINCESS KAHM...!!
WHAT WAS THAT LIGHT, YOUR HIGHNESS? AND WHAT HAPPENED TO GIRUK?!
.....
HE GOT WHAT HE WANTED.
THAT WIZENED LITTLE BODY AND EVIL HEART COULDN'T POSSIBLY HANDLE ALL THAT ENERGY, NO WAY...
SO... SIZZLE SIZZLE... AND GOOD RIDDANCE, TOO!
AREN'T YOU GOING TO TRY IT, PRINCESS?
NOT A CHANCE!!
I'M PLENTY STRONG ENOUGH WITHOUT IT! I'M INVINCIBLE!!
HEE HEE!
THAT'S TRUE...
WHO NEEDS THIS DUMB KEY, ANYWAY!

WHAT?!

YOU DON'T KNOW THE WAY HOME?!

HEY, IT ALL LOOKS THE SAME OUT HERE, RIGHT?

NO WAY TO TELL DIRECTIONS...

BUT, BUT, BUT!

OH WELL. I'M SURE DADDY WILL SEND SOMEONE TO LOOK FOR US PRETTY SOON.

MEANTIME, IT'S NICE AND QUIET OUT HERE, HM?

....

THE STARS ARE BEAUTIFUL TONIGHT!

I DON'T SEE ANY STARS...

The End